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The Department of Intellectual Property's IP Roadmap for Thailand

On June 20, 2016, Thosapone Dansuputra, the Deputy Director-General of Thailand's Department of Intellectual Property (DIP), made a speech on the DIP's roadmap for IP reform in Thailand. During his speech, Mr. Dansuputra mentioned five core strategies that the Thai government would follow in order to enhance IP protection in the country. The strategies relate to the creation, commercialization, and protection of IP; the prevention and suppression of IP rights violations; and the protection of geographical indications.

To foster innovation and promote the creation of IP, Mr. Dansuputra stated that the government would encourage SMEs and startup businesses to use IP databases, including patent mapping services and patent search services. This would enable enterprises to understand the past and current trends of R&D and patent activities in a particular industry, and it would provide an added benefit to the DIP's existing automated systems that support IP workflow administration, including patents (i.e., inventions, designs, and petty patents), copyright, trademarks, trade secrets, and geographical indications.

In order to provide support for IP rights holders to commercialize their IP rights, Mr. Dansuputra stated that government agencies would organize annual IP fairs and events, and the government would help local research institutions establish technology licensing offices. These offices would undertake patent searches to assess the novelty of innovations, market and commercialize inventions, and negotiate licenses.

As far as the protection of IP is concerned, the DIP faces a backlog of approximately 38,500 patent applications and 34,300 trademark applications. To reduce the backlog, while maintaining or improving overall patent quality, the DIP will implement work-sharing programs with other agencies and organizations, including universities, and adopt new procedures that speed up the examination process such as the ASEAN Patent Examination Co-operation program, a regional patent work-sharing program among ASEAN members. The DIP will also hire and train more examiners, to increase the number of patent examiners from 39 to 127, and increase the number of trademark examiners from 20 to 40. To further enhance IP protection, the DIP is currently in the process of amending laws to streamline patent and trademark registration procedures.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken to prevent and suppress IP rights violations under the supervision of the Suppression of Intellectual Property Infringement Subcommittee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan. The initiatives include the promotion of IP rights among the general public, seeking cooperation of landlords and relevant agencies such as the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration Authority, the State Railway of Thailand, and shopping malls (e.g., MBK Center and Pantip Plaza), and more. To raise IP protection awareness, the DIP is collaborating with the Ministry of Education to incorporate IP subjects into school curriculums and in activity-based programs of primary, secondary, and vocational schools.

For the protection of geographical indications, Mr. Dansuputra stated that this is intended to promote the marketing of Thailand's agricultural, handicraft, and artisan products. Appropriate and effective geographical indication protection systems help promote SMEs' products by guaranteeing exclusivity over the use of their geographical indications, and helping those companies overcome marketing challenges such as obtaining consumer recognition and loyalty. Appropriate protection policies could help transform manufacturing from quantity-driven indicators to quality-based factors. The Thai government is also considering a brand-building strategy for geographical indications to promote particular regions as tourist destinations. 🏞️